

Who is Who in Study & Practice of Buddhism

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

Today we will speak on the subject ‘who is who?’ When we ask the question: ‘who is who?’ – it’s the same as asking ‘who are we?’ or ‘we are who?’ This is something that is very important for those of us who are studying Buddhism and practicing Dhamma. This question is a most important one for us to consider. Who is who? When we come to study this thing called ‘Buddhism,’ which teaches that there is no *attā*, no ‘self,’ no ‘soul,’ no ‘we.’ We come to study Buddhism which teaches that there is no ‘self’ or ‘soul,’ then who is it that comes to study Buddhism? Who is who? Who comes to study it? Who is it that is experiencing *dukkha*? Who is it that is bothered by suffering? Who is it that is driven to study Buddhism by the problem of *dukkha*? We must look at this and so today we will consider the question: who is who?

All of you have come to Suan Mokkh, and all of you, in coming here, have some kind of feeling or belief in an ‘I,’ in a ‘me,’ in some sort of ‘self.’ Each of you, in coming here, comes with this feeling or concept of ‘I’ or of a ‘self.’ And when you come here, you are coming here to study Buddhism, which means you’re coming here to study the matter of not-self (*anattā*). You’re coming to study the truth of no ‘I,’ no ‘me,’ no ‘mine,’ no ‘we.’ This is something quite amusing which you have to give a lot of attention to. How is it that you come here with the feeling of ‘self,’ some kind of conception of ‘I’ or ‘me?’ You come here like that in order to study this topic, or this truth of not-self, of no ‘I.’ The ‘I’ comes here to study not-I. It may sound a bit crazy even, a bit strange. But here we look at this situation and realize that this ‘I’ or ‘self’ or ‘soul’ or

ātman or ego, whatever kind of entity we identify with as ‘I,’ as ‘me,’ we see that these things are just thoughts. They’re just a product of mental conditioning, and we see that in these thoughts or ideas or beliefs or feelings, that there is no reality. These are purely illusions – the symptoms of our inability to see things as they are. And so then we begin to look at this situation and realize that there is no ‘I’ and no ‘self,’ that all that is is just one thing. There is just one thing and this is the mind – the *citta* (the mind). So this is what we come to explore. We’re not here to explore the self. We’re here to understand the mind.

Buddhism is the religion which teaches *anattā* (not-self, not-soul). This sets it apart from all the other religions because all the other religions assert that there is some ‘self,’ some ‘soul,’ some *attā* or *ātman*. Buddhism teaches that there is no such thing, that these are just concepts and ideas created by the mind that have no true reality. In Buddhism, there is just the reality of mind, of the mind, of *citta*. There is the *citta*, and a strange thing about this *citta* is that it is able to think in deluded way. And so this *citta* thinks of this idea of a ‘self’ or ‘soul.’ It creates the concept of ‘I’ and believes in it. It creates this illusion and holds that the illusion is true. This is how the *citta* works ignorantly. A prime example of this is the western philosopher, Descartes, who authored the famous words “*Cogito ergo sum*” – *Cogito ergo sum* which are usually translated “I think therefore I am.” Because there is thinking, there must be some ‘I’ which exists. This is a rash assumption. The *citta* thinks, and it thinks often in deluded ways, and it gives rise to this illusion of a ‘self’ or ‘soul,’ of the ‘I.’ But just because this thinking exists, it doesn’t prove in any way that that self or ‘I’ has any true reality. So this is what’s happening: this *citta*, the mind, thinks in certain way; it comes up with this idea of a ‘self’; through ignorance the *citta* clings to this idea and then attaches to it as something that is true.

When we say that there is only the *citta*, the mind, consciousness, some of you may ask, what about the body? Isn’t there some body which exists, besides the mind? Or isn’t there some body which might be the self? The body really doesn’t have much meaning. The body is nothing but the office where the mind works. The body is just a tool of the *citta*. It is not important or meaningful of itself, and it is really no problem at all. So it is the *citta* where there is meaning. It’s the *citta* that we are concerned with. Some of you who have studied Buddhism before, or those of you who have been here throughout this retreat, have heard that the mind can be divided into four activities: *vedanā* (the feeling), *saññā* (the perception), *saṅkhāra* (the thinking), and *viññāṇa* (the sense-knowing). Many of you have heard about this before. But don’t be

confused and think that there are four minds, that there are four different consciousnesses or citta. There is still only one citta but the citta can function in at least these four different ways. It's one citta but it can display a variety of symptoms. Sometimes this one citta will display the symptoms of feelings, of reacting to sense-experience as either liking, disliking, or uncertainty. Other times the citta will perform the function of perceiving, of noting and distinguishing certain marks and signs of the sense-experience. Other times the citta will perform the function of thinking, which we call *saṅkhāra*. And then there is also the function of clearly-knowing the sense-objects – the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts. These are four activities or functions of the mind but in the center of all these, there is just one mind. There is just the citta. The citta has a variety of functions which it can perform, but there is only one citta.

Before we go further, we need to point out that this thing, the *citta*, the mind or consciousness, is nothing but an element of nature. The citta is only a natural element. In the language of the Buddha, we call this the *viññāṇa-dhātu* – the element which is aware, the element that knows. This is the mind, the *citta*; just an element that occurs naturally; it arises naturally through nature. The thing about this – this element which knows, which is aware, which is sensitive, which perceives – this element depends on the body, on physical elements, in order for this knowing, for this awareness to take place. What this means is that this *viññāṇa* element is able to function only using the medium of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Using these various physical media, the citta or *viññāṇa* element performs the various functions of awareness and knowing and feeling in sensitivity. Originally this *viññāṇa* element, the consciousness element or citta, was blank. But then as various sense-objects made contact with it through the various sensors of the eyes, the ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind – when these sense-objects come in and make contact with the citta – then the citta is no longer blank but the process of conditioning has been started. These sense-objects touch off a series of conditioning, and then the mind is no longer blank. It begins to think. It begins to condition various ideas and thoughts. And it starts to think about this and that, and over there, and all kinds of things. It has thoughts such as: *I exist* or *I am*; the thought that *I experience dukkha, I suffer*; experience the thought *I don't want to experience dukkha, I don't want to suffer*; *I want to study Buddhism, I want to practice the Dhamma* in order to eliminating dukkha, *I want to practice Dhamma to be free of suffering, I am practicing Dhamma now, I am receiving the benefits of practicing Dhamma, I have benefited from practicing Dhamma*. All these kinds of thoughts are conditioned in the citta through the contact of the sense-objects.

But this citta is nothing but a natural element which can function only through the media – through the senses.

So this citta is something very very difficult to talk about and explain because this one thing can change in all these different ways. It can be this way, and then change to this way, and change that way. It's constantly changing, performing a variety of functions and assuming different forms. This is very very difficult to explain. So we'll try to use a metaphor or simile to explain this. Although the citta itself is something immaterial, something mental, we will use a physical example. We'll compare with something physical which you can understand quite clearly, and then take that physical thing and compare it with the mind. This will help us to explain what the citta is like. We use this simile of a lump of glass or a crystal – a piece of crystal, a solid piece of crystal. It's very very clear. It has no color whatsoever. It is absolutely clear. Now if you take this piece of crystal and shine a red light on it, then the crystal becomes red. If you shine a yellow light on the crystal, it becomes yellow. Shine a green light on it, it becomes green; a blue light and the crystal is blue; a purple light and the crystal is purple. Dozens or hundreds of different colors and shades of colors can be shone upon this crystal, and the crystal is always changing depending on that color. This is a simile for the citta. Or if you'd like, we can use the example of a pair of glasses or sunglasses. If you put on a pair of glasses, when the lenses are red, you see the whole world as red; when the lenses are blue you see the whole world is blue, or yellow, green, chartreuse, magenta, and all the tens and hundreds of different colors and hues and tints. The citta is like that – just one citta but depending on the color of light shone upon it, it changes. With the citta, the things that have this influence upon it are called the *arom* in Thai, or in Pāli the *ārammaṇa*. It basically means the sense-objects – the various sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts – which shine upon the citta, which make contact with the citta, and then condition it, condition the citta in this way or that way or this way depending on that sense-object, that *ārammaṇa*. This is a metaphor to help you to understand how it is that this one single citta can be always changing and displaying all these different symptoms, performing these variety of functions. Many many possibilities that the citta may assume but fundamentally there is one single citta. Hopefully this simile will help you to understand what we mean.

As we mentioned earlier, this one mind was originally blank. But then this thing – the *ārammaṇa* (which I have translated 'sense-objects') – comes in and sets off a process of conditioning which is similar to a light shining upon the crystal. These *ārammaṇa*[s] – these external objects which come in and make

contact with the mind, which touch off this conditioning – this is a very important point to understand if you are to understand how it is that the mind assumes all these different forms and functions. So we'd like to explain this word *ārammaṇa* more carefully. *Ārammaṇa* is in the language of the Buddha – the Pāli language. In Thai it is shortened to *arom* and it is generally translated 'sense-object.' But this word 'sense-object' probably has too narrow a meaning, and doesn't quite give the full meaning of the word the Buddha used which is *ārammaṇa*. This word *ārammaṇa* means 'something which is grabbed.' The *ārammaṇa*[s] are things which the mind grasps onto, clutches at; or we can even say snatches. The *ārammaṇa* are things which the mind goes out and grabs and snatches. This is the full meaning of *ārammaṇa* or *arom* which is not quite conveyed by the word 'sense-object.' But when we're talking about the 'sense-object,' we're talking about these things which the mind snatches. It clutches at and grabs them. So when the mind snatches one of these *ārammaṇa*[s], then that touches off and begins a conditioning of the mind. The mind is conditioned depending on how it reacts to whichever *ārammaṇa* has been snatched. So this is very very important. Please understand the meaning of this word *ārammaṇa* and understand how the mind's interaction with the *ārammaṇa* touches off all this conditioning of the mind.

These *ārammaṇa*[s] are quite dangerous. Let's look at a newborn infant to get an idea how this process works. The infant that has just been born, has just appeared into the so-called 'world' out of his mother's womb. At first, if the sense-organ – the sensory-apparatus: visual, oral, etc. – is not functioning, then the citta of that infant will be blank. The infant's mind will be blank because there is no sense stimuli, sense data coming into the mind. But once this sense-organ begins to function, then the mind is no longer blank. For example, when the infant is sucking at its mother's breast, drinking milk from his mother's breast, then there is the taste sensations on the tongue using this one sense-door of the tongue. There're coming these various sensations, and these are interpreted as pleasing, as delicious. So the sense-object of the mother's milk comes in and conditions the feeling of deliciousness, of pleasantness, in the mind. The mind is already snatched away by that sense-object, and then the process of conditioning begins – and there is this feeling of sense-object or of deliciousness. And this would further condition the thought or feeling of an 'I' that experiences that deliciousness; *I am* delighted; *I am* pleased by this deliciousness. So here is this arising of the 'I.' It's interesting to see that this thought or feeling of an 'I' occurs *after* the sensory-contact. First, the mind snatches away that *ārammaṇa* – in this case the taste of the milk. And then only later does the conception of an 'I' or 'self' or 'soul' arises as the latter part of

the conditioning. The same kind of process will happen when the infant is hugged and cuddled in his mother's arms or father's or brother's or sister's or whatever. There is this touch sensation and then the infant's mind will snatch that – that ārammaṇa – and that will touch off the process of conditioning. And the same kind of things will occur with the eyes especially the way people like to dangle beautiful objects in front of a baby's face to stimulate it. So all these colorful and interesting shapes will be snatched by the baby's citta. And the same happens with sounds, smells, and even thoughts. So the originally blank mind of the infant is conditioned in this way – by this snatching of these sense-objects. And then the mind reacts, begins to be pleased by certain objects or displeased by others. And this gives rise to the feeling of an 'I' – *I am* pleased; *I am* displeased; *I like*; *I dislike*. And this is the root-cause of all the problems experienced by the citta. When the untrained mind of the infant gets into this habit of snatching away an ārammaṇa, and then like falling into the trap of this liking and disliking, then there arises this thought of an 'I,' this conception and illusion of some 'self.' And this is where all the problems of the citta begin. So this shows how these sense-objects, these ārammaṇa[s], shows how dangerous they are because they have this power to influence the mind. And so the mind, through the influence of the ārammaṇa, is always changing this way, that way, this way, that way, in hundreds or thousands of different ways. One citta is manifesting all these different forms, and activities, and shapes, under the influence of the conditioning of the ārammaṇa. This shows the power and danger of the ārammaṇa – the ability to condition the mind in this very powerful way, which gives rise to the 'I,' which is the source of selfishness and all the other problems experienced by the human citta.

Through the influence of the ārammaṇa, this thought or conception or illusion of the 'self' or 'I' arises. And as it arises more and more, it becomes stronger, it becomes more attached to the mind, clutches to this illusion more and more, to the point where this concept of an 'I' is so strong that it gives rise to its opposite – the concept of some kind of enemy. And so the mind is caught up in this eternal conflict of 'I' and 'my' enemies. This is the terrible influence of the ārammaṇa. As the infant grows, as the sense-organs develop, more and more ārammaṇa make contact with the citta. The citta snatches up more and more of these ārammaṇa, so that the original state of brightness is long gone, and the mind is caught up more and more in this process of conditioning. This conditioning that is touched off by the ārammaṇa grows and grows. Patterns develop. Tendencies and habits become set. So by the time the infant becomes a teenager or a young adult, all these patterns of conditioning are very firmly established. They're very very strong. They have great control over the mind.

So at this stage in life – the stage of, say, a young adult – the sensory apparatus has been highly developed in this one way. So through the senses, the mind is always clutching at things. And it is cluttered itself up with all these ārammaṇa that it has snatched up. So we have certain tendencies reoccurring constantly. One tendency is that the mind will snatch up an object and will be pleased with it, pleased or satisfied by that object. This will condition the reaction of the mind – try to rake in, to pull in, to get more and more of that ārammaṇa, more of that sense-experience. This is one kind of conditioning of the mind. It is called in Pāli *lobha* or *rāga* (greed or lust). It is kind of rake in, to gather in, to get and pile all up – all these pleasing ārammaṇa. The second type of tendency which develops in the mind, we can call *dosa*. Dosa is when the object – the ārammaṇa – is somehow unpleasing, displeasing, or unsatisfied. So the mind will have the tendency to want to get rid of that, to knock it away, to get angry at it, to want to destroy it. So we have what we can call *dosa* (ill-will) or *kodha* (anger) – this is the second type of tendency which is conditioned in the mind. The third type of tendency is related to sense-objects which do not have the mediate influence of the mind, meaning they neither please [n]or displease the mind. For some reason the mind doesn't get caught up in either of these tendencies of liking or disliking but the mind is so addicted, this one citta is so addicted to the tendency of pulling-in or knocking-away that it's very confused by these objects which neither please nor displease. The citta is knocked off balance and doesn't know what to do. So instead of trying to pull in or push away, it runs in circle. It runs in very confused circles around that sense-experience, and this is called in Pāli *moha* (delusion, confusion). These are the three primary tendencies of conditioning which develop in the mind. These three kinds of conditioning are touched off by the sense-objects, the ārammaṇa[s]. And this develops, and this strengthens, as the human being grows from an infant to a young adult and older. It gets more set in this way. It gets more locked into this pattern of conditioning. If you're beginning to understand this you'll see how dangerous this whole situation is; how the mind is enslaved throughout this; and how we get caught up more and more into this addiction, to this illusion of an 'I,' of a 'self.' All this conditioning of the mind is always bringing up these thoughts of an 'I' – the 'I' who likes, the 'I' who dislikes, or the 'I' who is confused. And this 'I' grows and grows until it creates enemies. This illusion of an 'I' creates the illusion of enemies. And then the citta has got itself very much buried into not-knowing or ignorance. So it's caught up in this process of ignorance. This ignorance becomes the mind and doesn't understand things the way they are. this not-knowing or ignorance allows these tendencies to develop. Remember back with the infant's mind that

is blank. It is blank – that means it's in a state of not-knowing. So these conditioning, these three types of conditioning that we've just described, develop. And these we can call the *kilesa[s]* (the defilements). These are dirty impure activities of the mind. They arise because there is no *bodhi*. *Bodhi* is 'enlightenment wisdom.' It is direct seeing into the true nature of things. When there is no *bodhi*, the *kilesa[s]* develop. Because at the beginning of this whole mess, there was no *bodhi* available, and all these defiled conditioning arose.

Now we come to the point where we must discuss one very very important word. In Pāli this word is *upādāna* – clinging and grasping, or we can use a single word 'attachment.' We discuss this word because you must be very very careful to understand it properly. There is often much confusion about the proper meaning, the correct meaning of the word 'attachment.' Many people think that love is a kind of attachment, and then assume that to not-love is detachment. To love is attachment and not-love is detachment. This is a very common assumption but it is incorrect. To detach is really just another form of attachment. It's a kind of negative attachment, or we could say the mind attaches to something in order that it can detach. Generally this detachment is just some kind of... is caught up in that pushing-away. But most people think of this attachment as pulling-in or it's related to this pulling-in, and detachment is some kind of pushing-away. So many people get very confused ideas about Dhamma practice and think that they must go around pushing things away. This is foolish and leads to just as many problems as attachment. Let's go back to these three kinds of conditioning of the mind we mentioned. There is the pulling-in and this gives rise to the positive kind of attachment. And then there's the second kind of pushing-away which conditions what many people call 'detachment' – which is just some sort of 'negative' attachment. And then for those uncertain reactions to some objects that lead to confusion, to the running-around in doubt regarding some sense-experience; this leads to a confused kind of attachment – attachment wherein the *citta* is all stirred up and confused. This is attachment or grasping and clinging. Detachment is just a form of attachment. This attachment is essentially when the *citta* clings to something as 'I' or 'mine.' It has this egoistic identification with something which it wants to get or get rid of, or about which it is confused and uncertain. Attachment is the cause of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* can only arise when there is attachment. When there're any of these kinds of attachment, then the mind is conditioned in all sorts of different ways. Or we can say that these various kinds of defilements, which we described, condition the mind in hundreds and thousands of different ways. The *citta* is turning all sorts of colors; and then the ignorant *citta* goes and attaches to all these different colors: *I am* red, *I am* blue, *I am* yellow. It attaches to this

pulling-in, pushing-away, or confused running-around in circle. First this attachment for these defilements arise, and we can categorize them all as ‘craving.’ The Buddha used the word *taṇhā*. And *taṇhā* conditions *upādāna* (attachment) – this grasping at things as ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ Once attachment arises, it’s inevitable that the mind will experience dukkha. Attachment inevitably causes dukkha. So through all these attachment – all these ‘I’ and ‘me’ and ‘mine’ – dukkha is conditioned. If you are interested in this problem of dukkha, then you will now see how absolutely important it is to have a correct understanding of what we mean by ‘attachment.’ If you do not understand attachment properly, then you will not be in a position to deal with attachment; and therefore you will have very little success at dealing with the problem of dukkha. Please understand, please try to understand this word ‘attachment’ or *upādāna* correctly.

Everything that’s been talked about so far, you’ll be beginning to see it’s just this one mind. Everything is just the one mind, functioning in this way or that way, conditioning in this way or that way. We’re talking about nothing, but the one mind. The one mind receives the ārammaṇa or snatches the ārammaṇa; and this conditions the *vedanā* (feeling) of liking, disliking, and uncertainty. The *vedanā* conditions *taṇhā* (craving) – craving in the form of trying to pull in, trying to push away, or running around in confusion. *Taṇhā* conditions *upādāna*, attachment, clutching and clinging at things as ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ It’s the one mind that receives the sense-objects. The one mind feels liking and disliking. The one mind craves. The one mind attaches and it is the one mind that must bear this heavy burden of dukkha. Once the one mind attaches, then it must accept the weight and burden of dukkha. It is inevitable. But you see that all of this is just the one mind. All these different things – all this conditioning – is just the one mind. This is how the one mind is transformed or is conditioned in the way of dukkha, in the way that ends in dukkha. As soon as the one mind gets caught up in attachment, it must bear the burden, it must suffer the penalty of dukkha. No one decides this. It’s not a choice. It’s just the inevitable result of this conditioning of the one mind. All this happens because of the absence of wisdom, because of *avijjā* (ignorance, stupidity). Because the mind is foolish, because this one mind doesn’t understand the way things operate; it gets caught up in this process of conditioning and suffers dukkha. But there is a way out. The way out is the path of *bodhi*, of enlightenment and wisdom, of seeing things as they really are. This is the path of *bodhi*. *Bodhi* is just that same one mind. It’s just the single mind. As the mind experiences dukkha over and over again, as the mind attaches and then it’s burned, attaches and then it’s penalized, attaches and suffers, and this dukkha happens over and over again, the one mind

begins to be aware of this problem of dukkha. The one mind begins to see this dukkha as it really is, see how onerous, how disgusting, how useless it is. And in this way, there begins to arise wisdom – the wisdom that there’s this problem which we call *dukkha*. This is the beginning of wisdom. This is the beginning of the path of bodhi. The experience of dukkha begins to condition the wisdom that sees this dukkha. Once the one mind begins to develop this wisdom that there is the problem of dukkha, then the one mind begins to examine the problem and look for its cause. How did this dukkha arise? What conditioned this dukkha? And in this way wisdom grows. The path of bodhi develops even further into trying to understand the cause of the problem. And then as the one mind examines the cause, it will realize that there is the possibility of being free of these problems. There is the problem and it’s opposite. The opposite is the end – the solution to that problem. So wisdom develops even further. This one mind develops further to the point that it understands that there’s a possibility of ending dukkha, and then understanding that there is a cause to dukkha. It realizes there must be a cause to the end of dukkha. So the one mind explores and experiments until it finds the way to eliminate dukkha. This is how the one mind – the same one mind that experienced all those feelings and attachment and craving and dukkha – how the same mind then develops in wisdom. The experience of dukkha begins to cause the arising of wisdom. Wisdom develops into understanding the cause of dukkha. The same one mind is beginning to understand this cause, begins to see that there is an end to dukkha; and then learns the way of living, the way of practice that eliminates dukkha. The same one mind that experiences all these different things, the same one mind that performs all these different activities, displays these very many various symptoms. It’s the one mind, either in dukkha or in bodhi – in wisdom. To understanding these various working of the ‘one mind,’ then you will begin to see the importance of understanding how all these things work, and how this knowledge can liberate you. Generally the human mind remains caught up in the same old patterns of conditioning which we discussed earlier. Those of pulling-in, pushing-away, and circling around in confusion. The ordinary human mind is generally not capable of breaking out of this cycle alone. But somehow it is within the nature of the evolution of human mind that there arise beings who[m] we call the ‘Buddha,’ or we call ‘Buddhas,’ beings of the type or nature of a ‘Buddha.’ A ‘Buddha’ has a mind that is able to develop in the path of wisdom or Bodhi on its own. The ‘Buddha’s mind’ evolves on to this very very high level to the point that it fully realizes these Four Truths. And the ‘Buddha’s mind’ penetrates fully into the truth of dukkha, the cause of dukkha, the end of dukkha, and the way of living that leads to the end of dukkha. And then a

‘Buddha’ can teach this knowledge; and other minds can begin to receive this explanation from the ‘Buddha,’ either directly from a ‘Buddha’ or indirectly through a disciple – someone else who has heard the teaching and been able to understand it well enough to pass it on. And so the ordinary sentient being – the mind, the one mind of an ordinary being – can receive this information and begins to process it. And if the mind is able to begin to understand this information correctly, if it hears it often enough, if it is able to think about it clearly enough and somehow begins to take the first step of experimenting and see if this knowledge is actually true; then that knowledge can be the seed of liberation for that mind. And so we can talk about the ‘Buddha’ planting the seeds of bodhi, of wisdom. We can talk about what we’re doing here as we are planting the seeds of bodhi. Right now, we are planting the seeds of wisdom. But actually if we use the word ‘we,’ we’re talking quite stupidly. To say ‘we’ are planting the seed of wisdom is incorrect and foolish. What’s happening is just the one mind. The one mind is planting the seeds of wisdom. The one mind is growing in the understanding of dukkha, the cause of dukkha, the end of dukkha, and the path that leads to the end of dukkha. There’s no ‘we.’ There’s just the one mind developing on the path of bodhi.

So you see that everything that’s been said today has to do with the ultimate truth of the one mind. This is all we’re talking about – the ultimate truth of the one mind. The one mind receives the sense-objects, reacts to them in the form liking and disliking; and then arise the defilements of greed or anger or confusion. This causes attachment. The one mind attaches. And then the one mind is burdened with this problem of dukkha – this burden which weighs down and makes life difficult to live. This is just the one mind and the conditioning of the one mind. But if we truly begin to understand the truth of the one mind, we see how this dukkha itself begins to condition bodhi or wisdom; and then so the mind begins to develop in wisdom. The one mind grows in wisdom since all the working of the one mind – just one mind. Now most people will see these things that we would call ‘defilements’ or in Pāli *kilesa* – which is the trying to pull-in (the greed), the pushing-away (the anger), and the delusion and confusion. These defilements are seen as opposed to what we call ‘wisdom’ or to *bodhi*. But those who really understand the mind will see that the defilements – greed, anger, and confusion – are the one mind; and will see that wisdom – *bodhi*, the knowledge and understanding the way things truly are – this is also the one mind. If you understand this, then you see that the defilements and wisdom are the same things – just the one mind. The defilements and wisdom are the one thing. Listen carefully and understand this properly. Sometimes there are people with very childish understanding of

things, who listen incompletely and go away with half-baked idea; or they start saying, ‘this guy up there is crazy, he doesn’t know what he was talking about.’ But if you’re really interested in the way the mind works, then you’ll see that defilements and enlightenment is the same thing. The way things are in this world if somebody says this, they’re criticized. As soon as somebody says such a deep truth as defilements and enlightenment are the same thing, then they’re criticized from all around. There are all sorts of people ready to jump on this kind of statement. So in the past, when we have said things like this, we’re criticized. But we don’t care about the criticism, we’re concerned with truth. The truth is that there’s just the one mind. Defilements and enlightenment are the same thing – the one mind. So this is why we’ve been talking about this ultimate truth of the one mind.

You may understand that the words the ‘one mind’ and the words the ‘same mind’ are somewhat different; but really the ‘same mind’ is just that ‘one mind.’ So what we’re talking about here is the ‘one mind.’ We say that defilements and enlightenment are the same thing. Defilement is just a product of the mind, and enlightenment is just the product of that same mind. Defilement is nothing, but a conditioning of the mind. And wisdom is just a conditioning of the mind. These are just things that arise out of the one mind – bodhi, defilements and wisdom are just products of the one mind. They’re just *sankhāra[s]* (conditioned things). Defilement is a conditioned thing and wisdom is a conditioned thing. So we say they’re the same thing, arising out of the one mind. We have to be careful when we talk in this way, and you will as well. If you go and talk about this to somebody out on the street, who doesn’t have any understanding of the working of the mind, they’ll accuse you of speaking incorrectly, or they’ll say you don’t know what you are talking about, or they may even go so far to say you’re crazy. But what we’re talking about here – what has been talked about – is the one mind and the developing of the mind to a state of non-attachment; talking about such a refined state of non-attachment, that there is no attachment to even defilement, nor is there any attachment to wisdom. There is no attachment whatsoever, and we call this the ‘non-attached mind.’ Remember we’re not saying the ‘detached’ mind because detachment is just another kind of attachment. But non-attachment, the non-attached mind, this is the final goal of Buddhism. This is the most profound truth of the one mind – the non-attached mind, the mind that is not caught up in any concepts or feelings of ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ This is the ultimate truth of the one mind.

This is simply a matter of the one mind. Defilement is the one mind. Wisdom is the one mind. Defilement is void and wisdom is void, because the

one mind is void. It is empty of any self or soul, empty of ‘I and mine.’ Defilement is simply *tathatā* (suchness, the state of being thus). Wisdom is simply *tathatā*, suchness, the state of being such. The one mind is void – is *tathatā*. We’d like to give you a bird’s eye view of the entire process, from the very beginning to the end. We’ll take an overview of the whole thing so that you’ll understand what is all involved. We can summarize this in saying “from void to busy, and from busy to void.” In Thai it’s very nice; it’s “from *wang* to *wun*, and from *wun* to *wang*” – from void to busy, and then from busy to void. The one mind – from void to busy, and then from busy to void. Remember the infant, remember the embryo in the mother’s uterus – the fetus in the womb – the mind of that fetus is *wang*, is void. In that mind there are no thoughts or feelings of ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ This is the void. But then through the functioning of the sensory apparatus, there is conditioned defilement. Defilement conditions attachment and then there is dukkha. So the one mind goes from the state of void to the state of dukkha, of the mind that is busy, agitated, confused. This is *wun* – the mind that is busy and complicated and stirred up. The one mind goes from void to busy. But this state of busy-ness is dukkha, and then the mind begins to learn and grows in Bodhi, in enlightenment wisdom. And this Bodhi develops further and further. And so the one mind moves from the state of busy-ness to the development of wisdom, moves to the state of void. So we’ve got this process from void to busy, from busy to void. Or the one mind goes from void to void. Be careful about these two kinds of void. In the Zen tradition, they talk about ‘discovering the original face.’ Discovering the original face is talking about that void mind before the starting of all the conditioning. This is true, but in a way, it’s not completely true. Because if we talk about discovering the original face, that voidness of the original face of the mind before all the conditioning and dukkha and attachment started; that void is not the same as the final void. This first kind of void – the mind of an infant – that void is a void that can be conditioned. It’s the void that can turn into busy-ness – that’s one kind of void. But this other void is a void that is void forever. It is voidness that is always empty of ‘I and mine.’ It can no longer, this voidness will never get caught up in the conditioning and no dukkha will befall the mind that has realized this final void. So we go from one kind of void – the void of the infant’s mind or the fetus’ mind – to the void of the enlightened being. Both kinds of void are absent and empty of any thoughts or feelings of ‘I and mine.’ But the first kind of void can get caught up in the conditioning, and caught up in attachment and dukkha. But the latter kind of void – the final void of the enlightened being, of the enlightened citta – is the kind of void that will never be conditioned again, that cannot attach or detach ever again, and it’s

completely free of dukkha. The one mind goes from void to busy, from busy to void. Or we can just say from void to void, from emptiness of ‘I and mine’ to complete and permanent emptiness of ‘I and mine.’ This is the ultimate truth of the one mind.

So from void to busy, from busy to void, or we can just say ‘from void to void.’ To get from void to void involves a training of the one mind. The one mind must be trained and developed. We described this training yesterday. Through *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom), the mind is developed from void to void, or we can use the word *samatha* (tranquility) and *vipassanā* (insight), which means basically the same thing as concentration and wisdom. Through tranquility and insight, the mind is trained, the mind is developed from void to void. We talked about this quite a bit yesterday. What we’ve just said is a deep truth, but we’re going to hit you with something even more profound than that. To talk about ‘from void to busy, from busy to void’ is still speaking what is relative truth. So listen very very carefully. Give the following words your undivided attention, so that you do not confuse them. Don’t make a mess of this very profound truth which we’re going to tell you. When we say ‘void and busy,’ or ‘void and not-void,’ people generally see these as opposites. We want to tell you that void and not-void are void. Void and not-void are void. This first voidness is void, and not-void is void. Void is empty of any ‘I’ or ‘mine,’ any ‘self’ or ‘soul.’ And what we call ‘not-void’ or ‘busy’ is also empty of any ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ There is nothing in that busy-ness that you can call a ‘self’ or a ‘soul.’ Void is void, and not-void is void. Void and not-void are void. This is a very profound truth. This is ultimate truth. This is as deep as you can go. Void is void, and not-void is void. In all these things we’ve been talking about today, the infant’s mind is empty of any ‘I’ or ‘mine,’ any ‘self’ or ‘soul.’ There is nothing in there that can be called the ‘self’ or ‘soul.’ And as the feelings arise and the defilements – these defilements are all void. The one mind is void whether it is void or busy. Sometimes we say the one mind is void, sometimes we say it is busy; but in the deepest reality it is always void. There is never anything about the one mind which is a ‘self’ or a ‘soul.’ The defilements are void. Attachment is void. Even this attaching to things as ‘I and mine’ is empty of any ‘self’ or ‘soul,’ any *attā* or *ātman*. *Dukkha* (suffering, unsatisfactoriness) is void. Wisdom is void, and the void is void. The voidness of the feeling and the voidness of the enlightened being are void, are empty of ‘I and mine.’ There is nothing in there that is a ‘self’ or ‘soul,’ an *attā* or an *ātman*. The one mind is void. It’s always void. There is nothing but the void mind. This is the ultimate truth. Everything that we talk about in Buddhism is void. When we talk about the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, they’re all void. The Buddha is void,

the Dhamma is void, the Saṅgha is void. There is nothing about this Triple Gem which are ‘self’ or ‘soul.’ When we talk about *samādhi* (concentration), it is void. Wisdom is void. Tranquility is void. Insight is void. Morality is void. All this training of the one mind – this development of the one mind – is void. The one mind is essentially void. Whether it is void or busy, it is void. I hope you’ve been listening carefully and then you don’t confuse this. Because if you confuse this point and don’t understand it properly, you can cause yourself problems. So understand what you are being told in the correct way, and then you will be able to use this knowledge to realize voidness. When a mind realizes this essential voidness of everything, we say that that is *tathāgata* – the being who’s known as the Buddha referred to himself as ‘the Tathāgata’ which means ‘one who has entered into the void,’ one who has attained or realized the void. The one mind can be *tathāgata*, can realize the void – the other emptiness of ‘self’ or ‘soul.’ This is the state of being such. This is the state of being thus. The void is thus, it is the state of being just that. This is *tathatā* and *tathāgata* is the mind that has realized the *tathatā* of the void. Please understand this: everything, from defilements to wisdom, from void to busy, and from busy to void, all of it is purely void.

So everything is void. Even the highest thing in Buddhism, which is Nibbāna, is void. Everything is void: the things which are conditioned (the *saṅkhāra[s]*), the things which are not conditioned, which are *visaṅkhāra*. Whether things are conditioned or not conditioned, they’re all void. Ignorance is void. Enlightenment is void. Everything is empty of self and soul. We cannot find anything that can legitimately be called a ‘self’ or ‘soul.’ There is nothing which can be attached to. It is all just void. So it’s all void. It’s all a matter of this one mind – the same mind. The same mind gets caught up in defilements. The same mind realizes voidness; that mind is essentially void, is always void; that defilement is void and that enlightenment is void. So we talked about ‘we’ must do this, ‘we’ must do that, ‘we’ must do this practice, ‘we’ must realize the void. But, really, talking like this is still stupid, still talking about ‘we’ and ‘I,’ and is still caught up in attachment. To speak properly we have to say that ‘we’ is the one mind, ‘we’ is that same mind. It is the mind which must be trained. The mind must train itself. The mind must develop. The mind must realize voidness. It is that mind that is stupid, that is foolish, that is caught up in ignorance, and attaches and brings down dukkha upon it. It is the same mind which develops and trains, and realizes voidness, realizes Nibbāna. It’s the same mind and it’s all essentially void. So sometimes we may use the word ‘we’ to help the people who have never heard this kind of talk. But to use the word ‘we’ is still to not understand. It is best to say the one mind, the same mind trains and

realizes voidness. Because that same mind is void, always; it is eternally void. Even the illusion of not-void, the illusion of attachment; all of that is still void. The one mind is always void. So we have to be careful about saying ‘we.’ But those of you who have heard the saying “Self is the refuge of self” may wonder, is this true? It is true – ‘self’ is the refuge of ‘self.’ It means that the one mind must depend upon the one mind. The one mind cannot go and depend upon anything else. The one mind must depend on the one mind. It is the one mind that gets caught up in attachment and dukkha. It is the one mind that begins to understand that dukkha, understand the cause of dukkha, the end of dukkha, and the way of living to realize the end of dukkha, to realize the void. It’s the same mind and that same mind must find its refuge in the same mind. There’s no other refuge. This is to say that self is the refuge of self, that self is void. Both selves are void. This is just the way of talking. There is no reality of any ‘self’ or ‘soul’ or ‘I’ or ‘mine’ because it is merely just the one mind. The one mind takes refuge in the one mind.

So you’ve heard this word, this ‘self,’ over and over again. We keep saying that there is no ‘self.’ We keep talking about *anattā*. You hear something like “the self is the refuge of self.” To help you understand what we’re talking about, we’ll point out three different kinds of self. When we use the word ‘self,’ it can have three different meanings. So we’ll go through these three meanings of ‘self’ or ‘soul’ so you can see exactly what we’re talking about. The first kind of ‘self’ is the ignorant feeling that arises in the mind. It is the ignorant illusion that there is some kind of permanent entity, some kind of eternal person or ‘soul’ or *attā* or *ātman*. This ignorant feeling in the mind is the first kind of ‘self.’ The second kind of ‘self’ is the real self, the genuine true self, which is that there is no self. The second kind of ‘self’ is the realization that there is no reality to this word, this ‘self.’ The word the ‘self’ does not point to anything that actually exists. This is the second meaning – the real meaning of ‘self.’ The third meaning of ‘self’ is the kind of self that can be used to eliminate dukkha. When we talk about ‘self is a refuge of self,’ we’re talking about this third kind of ‘self’ which can be used, trained, and developed along the path of Bodhi, along the path of enlightenment wisdom. This is the kind of self that can be used and trained for the elimination of dukkha, for the elimination of the ‘self,’ for the realization of the fundamental reality of voidness. These are the three kinds of ‘self.’ We mentioned them so that you can separate and distinguish between them, so that you will not be confused. The first ‘self’ is that of the illusion within the mind. The second is the reality that there’s no such thing as a ‘self’ or ‘soul,’ *attā* or *ātman*. The third ‘self’ is that self which can be developed and trained to realize the ultimate state of voidness – the end of

dukkha.

Everything that we've talked about is about the mind, so in a way we can call it 'psychology' – the study of the mind. It will not be really wrong to call this psychology but what has happened these days is: what is commonly called psychology has been completely possessed by materialism. What is called psychology has always been used for material interest. It's been used in advertising, helping corporation make money, and to win friends and influence people, and for reasons of sex and other materialistic endeavors. This is the state of what is normally called psychology. So we really don't want to call this psychology. So we'll add a word and call it 'Buddhist psychology' or 'spiritual psychology' to differentiate between the kind of psychology which is caught up in materialism and greed. So this is Buddhist psychology – the working and understanding of the truth of the one mind.

The Buddha said that if someone understands the truth that the mind is void, and then it is conditioned by defilements, and then becomes void again, the Buddha said if someone understands this – this transformation from void to defilement to void – if this is understood, then it is possible for that person, that mind to practice mental development or what is commonly called 'meditation' or some people use the word *vipassanā* meditation. But if one does not understand this truth of how the mind works, if one does not understand that it is the one mind that changes from void to defilement to void, if this is not understood, there can be no mental development, there can be no *citta-bhāvanā*. That means it is impossible to meditate. If you do not grab this truth, then what you are doing is not meditation. To meditate, one must understand this transformation of the mind. The mind is originally void. It becomes defiled. The defilement passes away and then there is once again the state of void. We hope that you can understand this, so that you will be able to meditate properly, so that the *citta*, the mind, will be developed correctly.

So we can summarize this off by: if you ask the question 'Who is who?'; we can answer 'It's just the same mind, it's all the same mind.' 'Who is who?' 'It's all the same mind.' All these different functions, and activities, and shapes, and colors of mind, it's all the same mind. The same mind can be developed and trained so that it stops attaching. It becomes free of attachment. And then that same mind is developed to the highest possible knowledge. This is what this is about: developing and training the mind for the realization of the highest knowledge – the knowledge that brings about the elimination of *dukkha*. So if you ask, 'who is who?'; the answer is, 'it's all the same mind – the same mind that can realize the highest truth.'

Who experiences dukkha or who has all these problems of dukkha?

Who wants or needs to extinguish dukkha?

Who studies Buddhism in order to extinguish dukkha?

Who is practicing Dhamma?

Who is able to extinguish dukkha?

Who experiences the taste of extinguishing dukkha – that is Nibbāna?

The answer to all these questions is – it's all the same mind, the same mind that can change in all these different forms.

So the most marvelous and amazing and fantastic thing in the entire universe, it's this marvelous and fantastic ability of the mind to know itself, to know its problems, and to want to overcome those problems. This one ability, this fact of the mind, is the most marvelous thing in the entire universe.

And even further, most marvelous that this mind is able to control itself; this mind can master itself and train itself; it can develop itself and practice the Dhamma. This is incredibly marvelous that this mind is able to control itself, train itself, and develop itself.

And an even higher level of marvelousness is that this mind is able to transform itself from a mind that has dukkha to a mind that is free of dukkha.

It changes from an old life that is burdened by dukkha to a new life that has no dukkha at all.

This is the supreme marvelousness of the thing we call the *citta* and it's always continually the same mind.

In some other places, they teach that there are many many different minds. They have long lists and numbers attached to these lists of all these different minds. But we don't talk like that; we don't say that there are many different minds. We say that there is just one mind, the same mind; it's all the same mind.

So this is the ultimate secret of the thing that is called the 'single mind,' the 'one mind' and we'll end today's talk with this secret.

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